

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 305018

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: MILI, ECON, BB, US

SUBJECT: U.S. MILITARY FACILITIES ON ANTIGUA: UNDER
SECRETARY'S LUNCH FOR PREMIER BIRD

REF: STATE 302688

1. IN COURSE OF LUNCHEON HOSTED BY UNDER SECRETARY HABIB
ON DECEMBER 14, PREMIER BIRD MADE LOW-KEY APPEAL FOR U.S.
ASSISTANCE IN RESOLVING ANTIGUA'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. BIRD
DESCRIBED AT LENGTH HIS EFFORTS TO REVIVE THE ISLAND
ECONOMY AND INTEREST FOREIGN INVESTORS. WHILE OPTIMISTIC
ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF HIS EFFORTS, HE ALSO MADE IT CLEAR
THAT HE BELIEVES U.S. SHOULD -- IN RETURN FOR CONTINUED
USE OF OUR MILITARY FACILITIES -- ASSIST IN ANTIGUAN
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DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS.

2. ATTORNEY GENERAL PHILLIPS GAVE ELOQUENT MINI SPEECH
ON PLIGHT OF THE SMALLER CARIBBEAN STATES. HE STRESSED
THE FRAGMENTATION OF THE AREA, AND THE RESULTING UNVIABLE
ECONOMIES OF THE SMALLER ISLANDS. HE ALSO UNDERLINED

THE THEME THAT THE U.K. IS CASTING ITS SMALLER ISLAND DEPENDENCIES ADrift, BURDENED WITH THE FULL GOVERNMENTAL APPARATUS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF SOVEREIGN STATES BUT WITHOUT THE MEANS OF SUPPORTING THEM. HIS UNDERLYING MESSAGE WAS THAT THE UNITED STATES FACES SERIOUS TROUBLE

IN THE CARIBBEAN IF WE DO NOT FIND WAYS TO HELP.

3. PREMIER BIRD REITERATED HIS WELL-KNOWN SENTIMENTS FAVORING UNITY FOR THE COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN. DESPITE THE CLEAR MOVEMENT TOWARD INDEPENDENCE OF THE OTHER ASSOCIATED STATES, HE ASSERTED THAT ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IS PROCEEDING, AND HE THEREFORE DOES NOT DESPAIR OF AN ULTIMATE LOOSE POLITICAL UNITY.

4. UNDER SECRETARY HABIB ASSURED BIRD AND PHILLIPS THAT WE ARE VERY MUCH AWARE OF THE PROBLEMS AND NEEDS WHICH THEY DESCRIBED. HE ALSO EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT WE WILL BE ABLE TO REACH A MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY AGREEMENT FOR THE RETENTION OF OUR MILITARY FACILITIES ON ANTIGUA.

5. LUNCHEON CAME OFF IN A MOST WARM AND FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE, REINFORCED BY THE PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN THE PREMIER AND THE UNDER SECRETARY DATING BACK TO THE LATTER'S SERVICE IN THE CARIBBEAN IN THE LATE 50'S.
ROBINSON

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